

**WALDO COUNTY 2024 BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
DECEMBER 9, 2023**

In-person and Remote Teleconference (Zoom)

9:00 a.m.

(For more detailed information, see recording at waldocountyme.gov)

PRESENT: Budget Committee Members Robyn Tarantino (Lincolntonville), Thomas Wagner (Waldo), Mary Mortier (Belfast), Linda Payson (Searsport), Timothy Parker (Unity), Bob Kurek (Palermo), Tammy Higgins (Winterport). Also present were County Commissioners William D. Shorey, Amy R. Fowler, and Betty I. Johnson; Human Resources Director Annette McLaggan, and County Clerk Barbara Arseneau to take minutes.

CALL TO ORDER

1050 BUDGET – FACILITIES PORTION

Present was Facilities Manager Christopher Bryant and Jail Administrator Raymond Porter.

The buildings currently operating with solar are the Jail and the Emergency Management Agency. The Committee also said they expect the roof work on the Jail to be done this coming year.

The Committee discussed each line with C. Bryant and made the following changes:

4302 Electricity was increased to \$30,000.00

4303 Fuel Oil/Heating Oils was decreased to \$15,000.00

4307 Live Scan SVC Misc Utilities was decreased to \$1,000.00

4312 Water was decreased to \$2,000.00

4601 Repairs/ Maint – AC was decreased to \$2,000.00

4605 Repairs/Maint – Electrical was decreased to \$3,000.00

5101 Food was decreased to \$58,000.00

5230 Office Supplies was decreased to \$7,000.00

5243 Training was decreased to \$12,500.00

****L. Payson moved, T. Higgins seconded to approve the 1050 Jail/Corrections Budget at \$3,636,575.70. Unanimous.**

1076 COMMUNICATIONS CENTER BUDGET

Communications Director Michael Larrivee reviewed the budget request. The Committee reviewed the lines that Bob Kurek had emailed. The Communications Center has 8 different shifts that overlap. He has now separated that in the budget lines. Because of that many shifts, he cannot use the payroll shift program, so he is requesting funding for Scheduling Express.

The Committee discussed each line with M. Larrivee and made the following changes:

4100 Travel was decreased to \$1,000.00 in view of some training being held by video teleconference

4610 Copier Lease was reduced to \$0.00 since that machine has been moved to another office

4822 Criticall Testing was reduced to \$3,595.00

4840 New Rec Recruitment/Ret/Rec was reduced to \$1,500.00

5378 Training All was reduced to \$13,000.00 as some training may be by video teleconference

7011 was increased to \$2,800.00 to pay for the new 24/7 dispatcher chair

Waldo County is being reimbursed by Knox County for all direct costs related to temporarily taking 9-1-1 calls for Knox.

****T. Higgins moved, Linda Payson seconded to accept the 1076 Communications Center Budget at \$1,232,318.00. Passed by 5, M. Mortier was out of the room and T. Parker was opposed.**

1070 REGISTRY OF PROBATE BUDGET

Register of Probate Sharon Peavey and Judge Joanna Owen were present. S. Peavey answered questions related to the initial request for increase in the Judge's salary. It was requested because there had been no increases other than COLAs for the last 10 years as she believed the position was severely underpaid. The Commissioners said their position was to stay with the 4% COLA for everyone.

Line 4820 Court Appointments has gone up because attorneys are being paid more per hour by the State, and Waldo County pays significantly less, so it's harder to find willing attorneys. S. Peavey invited all to visit the Probate Registry and Court to see what they do. Court is usually on Tuesday.

The Committee discussed each line with S. Peavey and made the following change based on the previous few years' expenditures:

4635 Repair/Equipment Copiers was reduced to \$300.00

****Bob Kurek moved, L. Payson seconded to accept the 1070 Registry of Probate Budget at \$322,849.00. Passed by 6, T. Wagner opposed.**

1021 HUMAN RESOURCES BUDGET

Annette McLaggan was introduced as the new Human Resources Director who started the end of January 2023. A. Fowler explained that the Commissioners had discussed for a long time creating a Human Resources budget and now it has been created starting 2024. A part-time Office Assistant has also been added. Portions of the Commissioners' budget that pertain to H.R. were removed and put in the H.R. budget. A. McLaggan stated she could reduce the requests for the following lines:

4105 Mileage could be reduced to \$300.00

4110 Meals could be reduced \$200.00

4115 could be reduced to \$0.00, but the Committee felt she should not pay for lodging herself and changed it to \$300.00

4730 could be reduced to \$2,500.00

4820 was raised by the Committee to \$610.00 so she wouldn't pay dues herself

5335 could be reduced to \$650.00

5375 could be reduced, but the Committee left it at \$1,000.00

7011 could be reduced to \$0.00 because she's repurposed office furniture from other departments

****B. Kurek moved, T. Parker seconded to accept the 1021 Human Resources budget at \$115,029.00. Unanimous.**

1035 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY BUDGET

IT Director J-sun Bailey was introduced. He handles the Spillman/Motorola system for Waldo County, Searsport, Belfast, Islesboro, and Stockton Springs law enforcement agencies as part of his job.

Telephone line 4315 request is same as this year, but he will know better after a year has passed. He found out the cost had tripled early in the year because a contract had expired, so he's working with

Consolidated to reduce that cost. This budget line includes internet and land lines at each location, cell phones, MiFi hot spots, iPads and any device that has internet on it. Currently, any capital outlay items are funded from the Technology Reserve to try to keep budgets down. The Commissioners are slowly moving these costs to the Technology budget, as they are operating costs. The Future Technology Reserve is for major upgrades, about every 5 years. Roughly \$160,000.00 is still being funded from the Technology Reserve for 2024. Regarding cell phones, the County must be CJIS (Criminal Justice Information Systems) compliant. That type of data, including email, on a device must be controlled by the County and able to be wiped. The County policy dictates that County email must be on a County device, protecting both employer and employee. FOIA requests and subpoenas would only apply to the County devices. He listed all the departments that have cell phones and/or iPads. Some computers are 14 years old and must be replaced.

****L. Payson moved, R. Tarantino seconded to approve 1035 Information Technology as presented at \$223,484.00. Passed 5 in favor, T. Parker and T. Wagner opposed.**

(LUNCH BREAK AT 12:14 p.m. to 12:30 p.m.)

1080-4715 WALDO COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERS

The Budget Committee allowed WCAP to go next on the schedule since they had other commitments. Transit Systems Director Michael Hallunbaek and Development Director Monica Pettengill thanked the County for many years of support and made a brief presentation regarding services offered since 1965 both inside and outside Waldo County. It is funded primarily from State and Federal restricted funds, and the County helps fund other expenditures that come up and allows program flexibility.

Some Committee members felt that since WCAP already requests funds from each town, requesting from the County is “double-dipping”, and some said they requested information specific to their town and didn’t receive it, and some felt the service was expensive. Others stated that they received very detailed information on their town. M. Hallundbaek explained that each report was specific to each town and apologized for that not being understood. The funding request formula is equal and equitable based on individuals and households in the towns. WCAP asks each town for 2.5% of the cost of services to that town.

****L. Payson moved, T. Parker seconded to deny the request of \$5,000.00 for 1080-4715 WCAP . Passed 5 to 2. Opposed by R. Tarantino and T. Higgins.**

2005 WALDO COUNTY UNIVERSITY OF MAINE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION BUDGET

Home Horticulture Professional Viña Lindley was present. The Extension is a branch of the University of Maine and provides research-based information to citizens of Waldo County related to food and home by 9 staff members currently. The County pays for admin staff and office supplies, and also provides and maintains the building they work in, recently spending \$103,000.00 on mold remediation and other repairs. The initial request was \$61,300.00 and the Commissioners reduced it to the 2023 request of \$58,050.00. There was discussion on 4-H activities dwindling due to COVID and losing a key staff member who lead that. Programming for farmers, such as soil testing and result interpretation, prenatal education for families, and food preservation was discussed, as well as reduced staffing and the University determining what work must be done outside Waldo County. The majority of the funding comes from U. of M. State dollars and Waldo County receives \$570,657.00 in funds toward salaries. R. Tarantino said this is a resource for assistance for 26 towns and amounts to about \$2,200.00 each, was worth funding, and perhaps could be better advertised. Darcie Johnston, president of Waldo County

Extension Association and agriculture teacher in five elementary schools in RSU 3 in Waldo County spoke briefly about trying to get the word out to constituents. V. Lindley stated that one of the largest demographics is older, wants paper and in person information, and doesn't have online access. Some on the Budget Committee wondered what was done in their individual towns, and some offered to put information on their web sites and print it in their annual reports.

Various forms of fund reduction levels were discussed. M. Mortier referenced a report she read somewhere in the stack of papers that in 2022 the amount of \$48,669.38 was expended, so she recommended that.

****M. Mortier moved, T. Parker seconded to fund 2005 Waldo County Extension Office budget at \$48,669.38.** M. Mortier found the page and shared it with the group. Concern was expressed that the Committee isn't being consistent with how it's making cuts, some stated that the County is paying the rent in addition to the salaries. T. Wagner said that he felt each town should be contacted to post the Extension Office's programs and services. **Passed 4 to 3. R. Tarantino, T. Higgins and B. Kurek opposed.**

The Committee said they hoped the Extension would reach out to the towns to help get the word out, and M. Mortier commented on V. Lindley's excellent work, passion for her calling, and that it was an extraordinary circumstance that had caused this hard discussion.

2035 WALDO COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT BUDGET

Board Treasurer Gene Randall and Board Chairman Andy Reed were present. A. Reed reported that the road conditions were currently icy and to be very careful when they all drove home. The request has increased by 10%. They lost a staff member and the board members and volunteers had to come in and do the work. The initial request was for \$28,600.00 and the Commissioners reduced it to the previous year at \$26,000.00. This week they sent out 100s of emails to people. Funding from the State was briefly discussed. They work with all the towns in the County districts. They obtained a tree grant and were working with the City of Belfast on trees in the park and brought in about \$8,000.00. They do a lot of work with the Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) because they are located in their office, which is not common. This saves the County money. They received a grant to clean up Unity Pond, which was \$43,000.00. They are working in the future to clean up phosphate in the lake. This increases the Town value and the allotment in the County. They are working on the Miller St. Dam in Searsport, and deal with culverts. The CAP program in schools was mentioned and its value in teaching children. The person who did that has retired and they are looking to fill that position. They've gone to towns regarding culverts related to the Stream Smart program. They've gone to the counties and had no questions so far. Have sent a letter to every town. No responses so far. They are working with MidcoastCOG to help towns get funding and training to replace culverts.

T. Higgins moved, T. Parker seconded to approve the 2035 Waldo County Soil and Water District budget at \$26,000.00. T. Parker asked if this was voted down, could they discuss another amount. Discussion about the amount initially requested, and the amount the Commissioners recommended. The 2022 Financial Report was referred to by R. Tarantino and they explained that project was two years. Funding sources were asked about. G. Randall said it would be grants. The Lake Winnecook grant was discussed. A. Reed said the largest grant funding is gone. Many times the funding covered their time, but nothing else. T. Parker called for a vote. **Failed 2 to 5.**

PFAS were discussed, and what Soil and Water does for this. T. Parker asked what the return on the investment was. He said balance-wise, they are not making it. They are breaking even on expenses. R. Tarantino explained that the only reason was the Lake Winnecook project, and it had already been explained that the apparent lack of breaking even was due to timing differences because the grant was multi-year and receipt of funds didn't always sync with expenditures in a given year. T. Parker said it was a point of order, he was asking them, not her. A. Reed said it will make Unity Pond a place that people could swim in. Belfast City Park has benefited, and trees that are starting to be lost due to disease are doing well there. Sheepscot Lake was assisted through the NRCS local group. They impact NRCS and where the funding is used. They look at the community as a whole, try to find out who needs what, etc. The NRCS is not going out into the community. WCSWD can direct a local farmers to the NRCS. They support the Envirothon with students. Fund raising was discussed.

****T. Higgins moved, L. Payson seconded to revise the amount for 2035 Waldo County Soil and Water to \$25,000.00.** Discussion about the reports for 2022 expenses and whether the amounts were wages. It was also workers comp and payroll taxes. If the \$26,000.00 wasn't funded, it would impact the office person's salary, which is \$23,000.00 plus taxes. A. Reed said there will be nobody to run the office and it will put them out of business. T. Parker asked again what they are doing for their communities. A. Reed said they are having their next meeting in Searsmont to try to reach out to them about their lake. They reach out and if a town doesn't take advantage of it, they can't help that. They have gone to the towns. They put together emails and programs and make presentations. G. Randall said that grant funds come in, but there's an expense to offset that. L. Payson called for a vote. **Failed 1 to 6.**

****L. Payson moved, T. Higgins seconded to fund \$13,000 for this year and review things next year.** Discussion. T. Parker called for a vote. T. Wagner permitted R. Tarantino to speak. R. Tarantino said she believed that the higher numbers haven't passed, she felt that cutting \$12,000 to \$13,000 when money was already saved legitimately in other places, said she thought the committee was nuts for bringing it down to this, that a motion doesn't have to be seconded, and that these people have stood there for an hour. T. Parker called for a vote. **Failed 1 to 6.**

****T. Parker moved, L. Payson seconded to fund the budget for 2035 Waldo County Conservation District amount at \$20,000.00.** T. Wagner said he feels that they should look at what they do, some on the committee feel it's important but he himself did not have an opinion. B. Kurek said that he thought some of the work could be obtained from different places. T. Parker said that since he wasn't sure if they do, he'd rather keep them at \$20,000.00. M. Mortier said she felt that they are struggling not to drown. She said she is looking at two very passionate volunteers and knows that there is a whole state run by passionate volunteers who don't get paid, and she understands the passion, but the numbers just don't make sense. One employee is left. \$20,000.00 isn't going to pay that. They are struggling to pay other things with grants. If something happens to one of these volunteers, she is worried they won't survive another year. There was an extraordinary circumstance this year that they won't talk about but will affect the taxes, and the budget can't handle it. A. Reed said he has over 20 years with the District. R. Tarantino said that the receipts exceeded the expenses in each of their grants so that they were making small net profits. T. Parker called for a vote. **Failed 1 to 6.**

****R. Tarantino moved, T. Parker seconded to fund 2035 Waldo County Soil and Water at \$26,500.** T. Parker called for a vote. **Failed 2 to 5.**

R. Tarantino asked if the vote could be overruled. T. Wagner said he wondered if they should just be funded at zero or at \$26,000.00

****T. Parker moved, L. Payson seconded to take a 5 minute break. Passed.**

R. Tarantino said they are talking about \$26,000.00, which is \$1,000.00 per town and couldn't this be done to keep WCSWD going. She asked what everyone thought. Bob Kurek says they are dealing with some organizations that are in decline. R. Tarantino said she'd called them, and they helped. Bob Kurek said there are other organizations that can help. T. Parker said he knows numbers. They're a dying horse. They either need to reinvent themselves or don't. T. Wagner said this is either "do or die."

****T. Parker moved, M. Mortier seconded to either decide to fund 2035 Waldo County Soil & Water at their requested level at the Commissioners level of \$26,000.00 or not fund at all. No discussion. T. Parker called for a vote. \$26,000.00 in favor of funding? No hand raised. Not funding at all? Passed by 4 with 3 abstentions.** A. Reed said they appreciate the time they have spent working in the County and that they have done everything they can for the County and are sorry they feel that way.

1080-4719 WALDO COUNTY FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION BUDGET

Nobody was present but Commissioner Fowler briefly spoke about the services and programs.

****B. Kurek moved, T. Parker seconded to fund the 1080-4719 Firefighters Association Budget in the amount of \$5,000.00. Unanimous.**

1080-4723 CAMP CAPELLA BUDGET

****L. Payson moved to fund \$5,000.00 for 4323 Camp Capella. Motion died due to lack of second.** The Commissioners felt that because it was not located in Waldo County, they passed on that. L. Payson said that children and young adults from Waldo County have also benefitted.

A. Fowler said the entire 1080 budget needs to be voted on.

****B. Kurek moved, M. Mortier seconded to fund 1080 total at \$5,000.00. Passed Unanimously.**

B. Johnson asked if any of the other requests were being voted on or if it was just the Commissioners. She was referencing Midcoast Creative Coalition, Belfast Creative Coalition, From Above, etc. and she felt that they should each be voted on at the Commissioners' recommended level.

****T. Parker moved, L. Payson seconded to go with the Commissioners' recommendation to fund 1080-4722 Midcoast Council of Governments at zero dollars.** Discussion: B. Kurek said that of all the COGS, this one has been the most helpful to him. R. Tarantino said they had been extremely helpful to Lincolnville, assisting with grants for affordable housing, upgrading the ferry, and the moratorium tomorrow night about box stores and chain stores coming in. B. Kurek said they gave of their time to help with the Broadband for Palermo, Freedom, Montville, Liberty, and Searsmont. **Passed 4 to 3.**

1080-4722 FROM ABOVE BUDGET

A. Fowler commended this organization and explained that a Town was dealing with a large trash problem with a citizens and the County asked them to help clean and did provide a donation to help with the costs involved.

****M. Mortier moved, L. Payson seconded not to fund 1080-4722 From Above budget, and fund at zero dollars. Passed 4 to 3.**

T. Parker asked why the “HIT” was not funded in th budget. B Johnson explained that this is Belfast Creative Coalition and they decided not to request funds this year due to the budget being so tight.

1020 COUNTY COMMISSIONERS BUDGET

After brief discussion with the Commissioners and County Clerk, the Committee changed the following lines:

3001 Overtime reduced to \$750.00 as this was an unusual year with turnover in employees

3100 P/T reduced to \$1,500.00

Line 4015 Professional Services increased to \$30,000.00 to cover an accidental omission of funds for potential legal fees. Brief discussion about potential payroll fees. More research would be done by the H.R. Director because the new payroll system was only started in 2023. She believed there would not be any as she was not aware of any unless it came in during the month before she was hired.

Line 4110 Meals reduced to \$500.00

Line 4115 Lodging reduced to \$600.00

Line 4820 Dues reduced to \$11,103.00

Line 4845 Safety Committee Supplies at \$0.00

Line 4900 MCCA Convention Hosting at \$0.00

Line 5375 Training/Education reduced to \$400.00

****B. Kurek moved, T. Higgins seconded to accept 1020 Commissioners Budget at \$243,507.00. Passed by 6, T. Parker opposed.**

2040 RECORDS PRESERVATION BUDGET

****M. Mortier moved, B. Kurek seconded to accept 2040 Records Preservation Budget at zero. Unanimous.**

T. Wagner said he highly recommended that the Commissioners keep the wages in union contracts aggressively low or if he is chairman again, he will vote the bottom line down. He said that in his town there will be more liens and more requests for help.

W. Shorey said he appreciates what he is saying, and the Commissioners try to keep the contracts low. They are doing the best they can.

T. Wagner said it has to go from the bottom up.

FUTURE BUDGET MEETINGS:

The Committee noted that they are scheduled for the public hearing on November 30, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. 2024 Public Hearing & Final Budget Meeting for Saturday, December 30, 2023 starting at 9:00 a.m.

****T. Parker moved, T. Higgins seconded to adjourn at 4:25 p.m. Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted by Barbara L. Arseneau Waldo County Clerk
Barbara L. Arseneau